

## MATTHEW ARNOLD AND AN AUSTRALIAN ADMIRER

ROBERT Dudley Adams (1829-1912), a busy figure in the Sydney commercial and shipping world, was a *litterateur* of some note in his time, a contributor to Sydney and English magazines and the author of a volume of verses *The Song of the Stars and other Poems* (Melbourne 1882), which he published under the non-de-plume of "Alpha Crucis." An indefatigable if indiscriminating correspondent with literary figures in England he accumulated from such sources autograph letters which, if the Turnbull Library group represent even the average level of interest, might well repay some research work. The library contains some dozen examples ranging from gushing letters of gratitude for his appreciation from minor women novelists like the now forgotten Mrs. E. Lynn Linton and Helen Reeves, a card of thanks from the minor but not entirely forgotten Ouida, to somewhat more formal though interesting correspondence from R. D. Blackmore and Walter Pater and even a brief acknowledgment (*Grazie per i preziosi Illustrati di Sydney, e per la gentile vostra lettera*) from Garibaldi. Adams, it appears, was a practised celebrity-hunter.

The most interesting group of letters are three from Matthew Arnold, with whom Adams continued to correspond after his initial approach. Adams' usual method was to write a letter of appreciation to some literary figure, which generally evoked a response of gratitude and surprise that far-off Australia should be interested in literature—and then the correspondence ceased. Arnold, however, had a son in Melbourne and this was an additional reason for an interest in the other side of the world. The first letter (January 23rd 1881) is an acknowledgment of Adams' original letter of appreciation, which having been posted to "Matthew Arnold, London" had not unnaturally missed him, gone back to Australia and had then been re-posted. Arnold expresses his regret and goes on to comment on Adams' letter :

"You do not give a brilliant account of the Sydney libraries and book-trade. They seem to be ahead of you at Melbourne. My publisher told me that the agent for the Melbourne book-trade took 50 copies of a single book of mine—"God and the Bible"—and I am not at all a popular author. My poems are published by Macmillan, in two volumes ; they are at present out of print, but